

# Life Expectancy in Wirral 2021-23

Public Health  
Intelligence Team

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## Life Expectancy in Wirral 2021-23

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### Report Overview

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Abstract</b>                       |   |
| <b>Background to this report</b>      | This update summarises the most recently available data (2021-23) for life expectancy (LEx) in Wirral.  |
| <b>Intended or potential audience</b> | <b>External</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wirral Partners</li><li>• General Public</li></ul> <b>Internal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Director of Public Health and wider Public Health Team</li><li>• JSNA Bulletin</li></ul> |
| <b>Links with other topic areas</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Deprivation</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Population</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Mortality</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Health Inequalities</a></li></ul>  |

### PLEASE NOTE:

**Wirral level data for 2021-2023 has been used in this document**

**An updated Life Expectancy report for Wirral, which includes Ward level data for 2021-23, will be developed after local Ward level populations have been published by Office for National Statistics in the summer of 2025.**

**The figures in the 'Life Expectancy by Geography' section relate to data for 2020-22 only.**

## Key Findings

- Life expectancy (LEx) at birth in Wirral increased steadily from the 1990s to early 2000s for both males and females, but both appear to have plateaued since around 2009-11.
- In 2021-23, LEx at birth in Wirral was 77.5 years for males and 81.9 years for females; the gap between males and females has decreased (4.4 years) compared to 2020-22 (4.5 years).
- Birkenhead and Tranmere had the lowest LEx at birth for males (70.0), whilst West Kirby & Thurstaston had the highest (83.4). For females, Rock Ferry had the lowest LEx (76.9) whilst Greasby, Frankby and Irby had the highest (87.4). (2020-22 only)
- The gap between LEx at birth at ward level in Wirral is wider in males than females; 13.4 years for males and 10.5 years for females. (2020-22 only)
- LEx at 65 for males and females in Wirral increased by 0.2 years in 2021-23, compared to decreases regionally and nationally. This means the gap in LEx at 65 between Wirral and England has reduced for both sexes.

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## Introduction

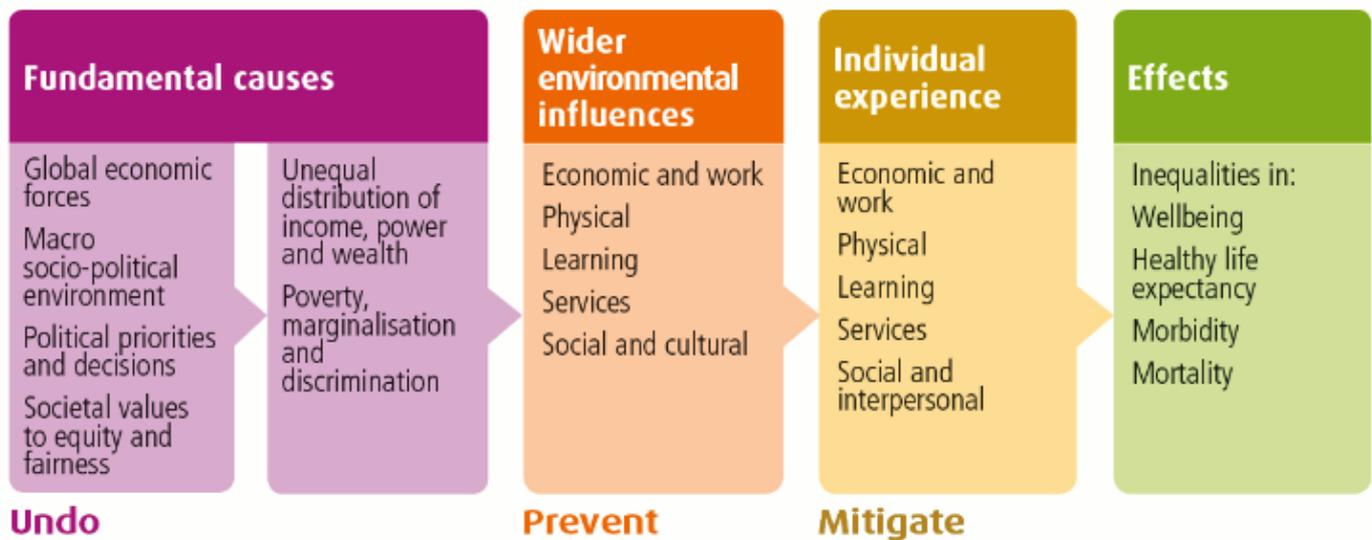
This update summarises the most recently available data (2021-23) for life expectancy (LEx) in Wirral and compares local and national data. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME, 2025) estimates that the average life expectancy at birth globally was 71.7 years in 2021; 74.8 for women and 68.9 for men.

Life expectancy at birth in England showed dramatic increases throughout the twentieth century as health and living conditions improved. It increased from 46 years for males and 50 years for females in 1900, to 78 years for males and 82 years for females in 2011. However, LEx appears to have plateaued since this time, not just in England but in other developed countries.

It should also be noted that previous increases in life expectancy were not uniform across all social groups and the inequality in life expectancy between those living in areas of deprivation and those from more affluent areas remained (and was then exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-10 pandemic).

Consequently, reducing inequalities in LEx was a public health target throughout the 1990s and 2000s and is now one of the overarching indicators in the current [Public Health Outcomes Framework \(PHOF\)](#). The causes of these health inequalities are complex and involve interactions between social, educational, economic and structural factors (**Figure 1**).

**Figure 1:** Health inequalities: theory of causation



**Source:** Molony & Duncan, 2016 (Income, Wealth and Health Inequalities — A Scottish Social Justice Perspective)

# Life Expectancy at Birth

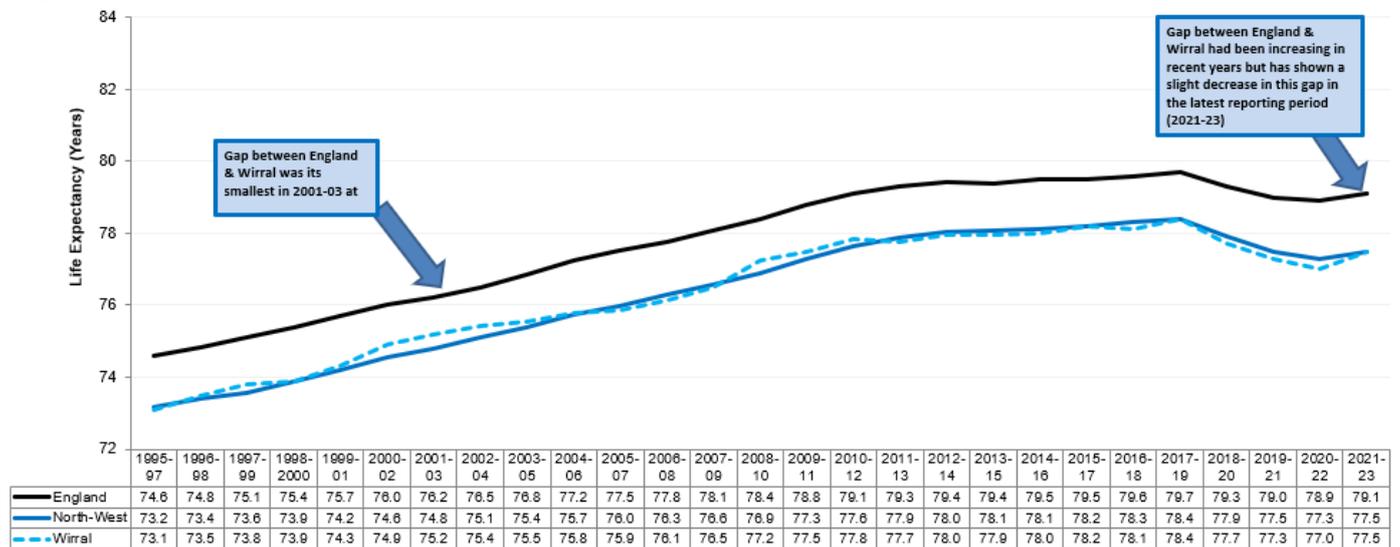
## Figures reported in this section relates to 2021-23

Life expectancy (LEx) at birth is the average number of years a person would expect to live based on contemporary mortality rates. However, it is a hypothetical measure that assumes the same mortality (death) rate will apply to the entirety of someone’s life from that point forward. However, along with infant mortality, it is a useful and widely used indicator of the population’s health overall.

**Figures 2 and 3** show the annual trend in LEx at birth for males and females in England, North West, and Wirral between 1995-97 and 2021-23.

Since 1995-97, LEx at birth has increased by 3.9 years for males in Wirral, compared to 4.3 years for males in England. Therefore, although LEx has been increasing locally, it has been increasing in England at a greater rate, meaning that the LEx gap between men in England and Wirral has widened.

**Figure 2:** Trend in Life Expectancy in males, Wirral, North West & England, 1995-2023



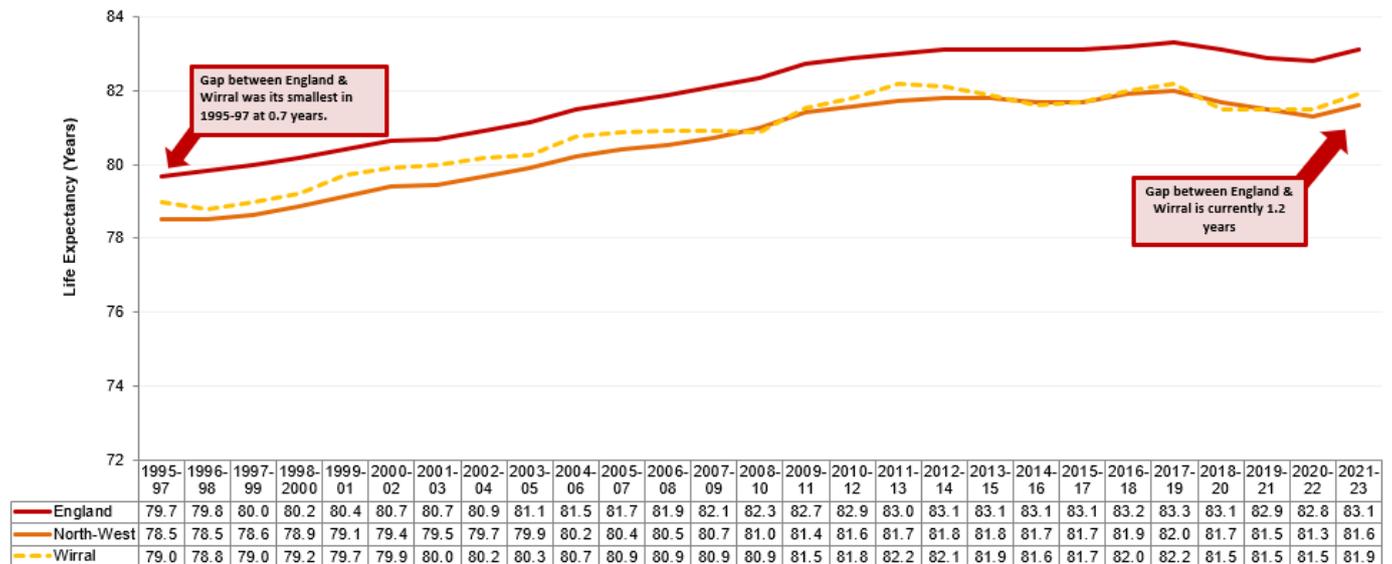
Source: [Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2025](#)

Note: A larger version of this chart is available in Appendix 1

**Figure 2** shows current life expectancy in 2021-23 in Wirral males is 77.5 years, which is lower than the figure for males in England (79.1 years). The gap between Wirral and England in male life expectancy has decreased slightly (1.6 years) compared to the highest gap recorded in 2020-2022 (1.9 years).

As **Figure 2** also shows that the last three time periods have shown a decline in life expectancy in Wirral males, which has mirrored the decline seen in both England and the North West; each of these three periods includes one or more of the peak years for COVID-19 deaths. In 2021-23 there has been an uptick in life expectancy for the first time in three years both in Wirral and nationally.

**Figure 3:** Trend in Life Expectancy in females, Wirral, North-West & England, 1995-2023



Source: [Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2025](#)

Note: A larger version of this chart is available in Appendix 2

Since 1995-97, LEx at birth has increased by 2.5 years for females in Wirral, compared to 3.1 years for females in England. Therefore, although LEx has been increasing locally, it has been increasing in England at a greater rate, meaning that the LEx gap between women in England and Wirral has widened.

**Figure 3** shows current life expectancy in 2021-23 in Wirral females is 81.9 years, lower than the figure for females in England (83.1 years). The gap between Wirral and England in female life expectancy is currently 1.2 years.

As **Figure 3** also shows, the last three time periods have shown life expectancy remaining stable for Wirral females, while England and the North West overall have seen decreases.

## Life Expectancy at Age 65

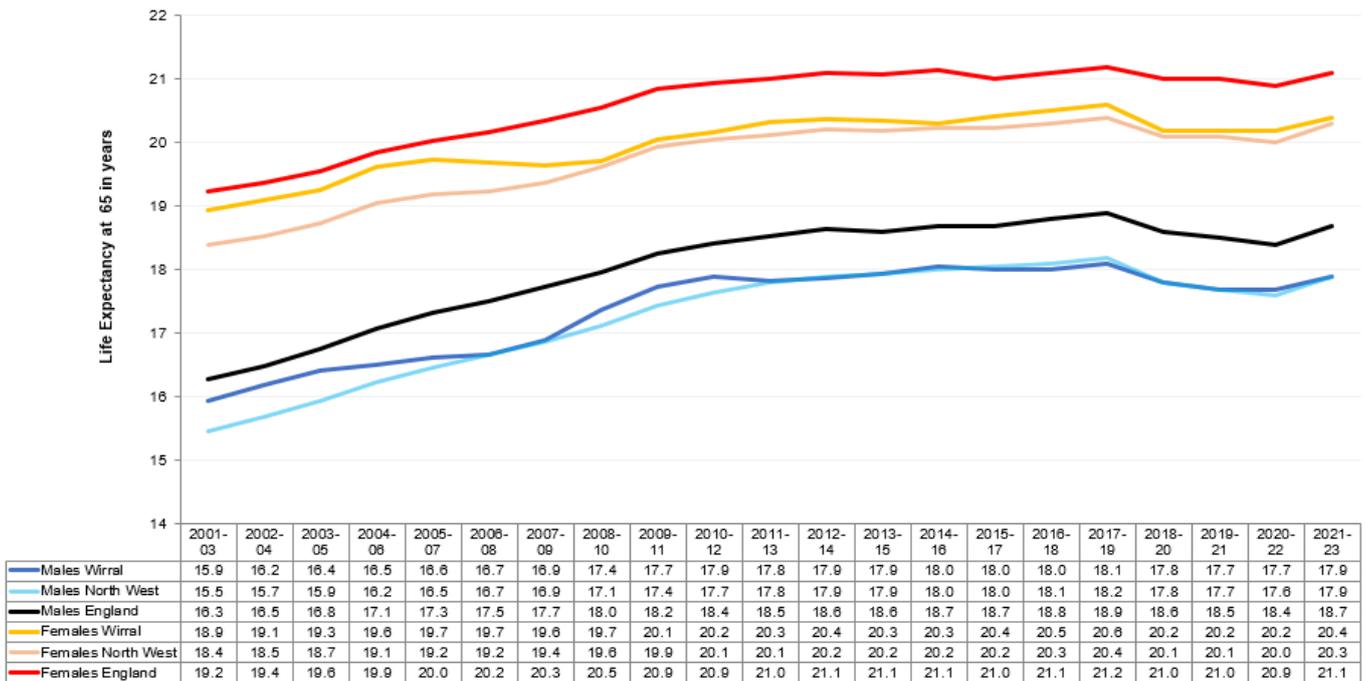
### Figures reported in this section relates to 2021-23

**Figure 4** shows life expectancy (LEx) at age 65 in Wirral, the North West and England for both males and females from 2001-03 to 2021-23. LEx at 65 is defined as the average number of years a person would expect to live based on contemporary mortality rates. For a particular area and time period, it is an estimate of the average number of years at age 65 a person would survive if he or she experienced the age specific mortality rates for that area and time period throughout his or her life after that age. The chart shows that after many years of increasing gains in LEx at age 65, 2009-11 marked the start of a plateauing in England, the North West and Wirral, followed by decreases since 2018-20.

The most recent time period (2021-23) shows an increase of 0.3 years in male LEx at 65 both regionally (from 17.6 to 17.9) and nationally (from 18.4 to 18.7) and an increase of 0.2 years in Wirral (from 17.7 to 17.0). This means that the gap in male LEx at 65 years between Wirral and England has increased (by 0.1 in 2021-23). LEx at 65 for females also increased in Wirral (0.2 years) and increased by 0.2 (nationally) and 0.3 years regionally.

This means the gap in LEx in women aged 65 years between Wirral and England has remained the same in 2021-23.

**Figure 4: Life Expectancy at age 65 by sex and area 2001-03 to 2021-23**



Source: [Public Health Outcomes Framework, 2025](#)

## Life Expectancy by Geography

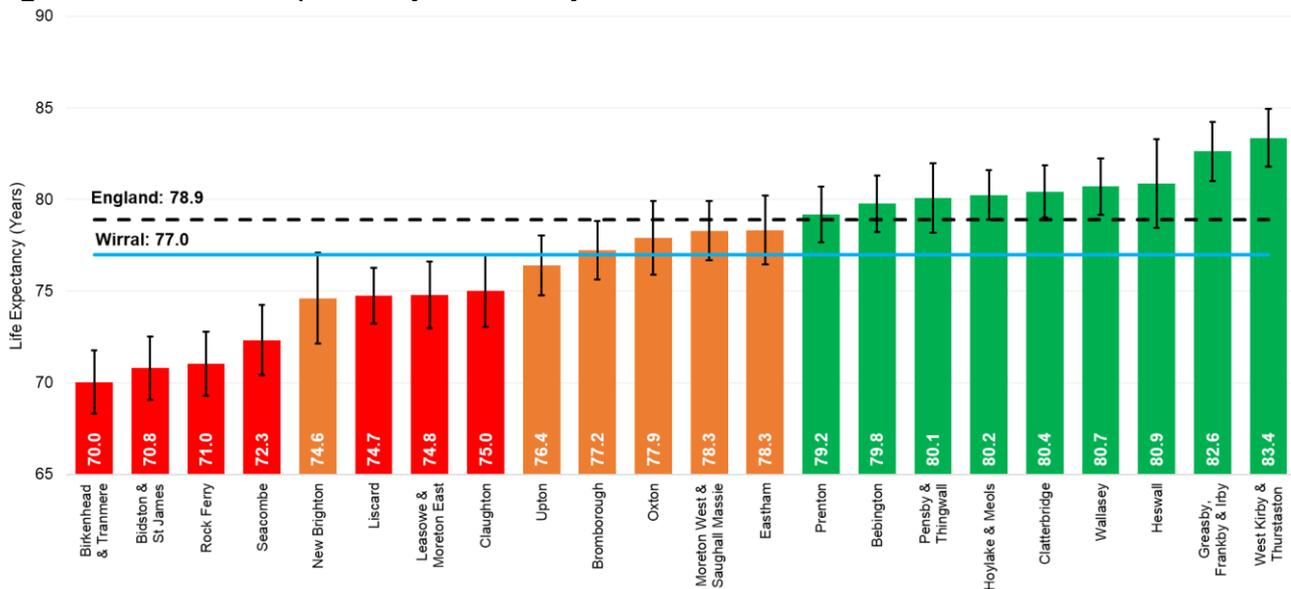
### Life Expectancy at Birth by Wirral ward

Figures for 2021-23 will be updated once the Ward level populations have been published in the summer of 2025. The figures in this section below relate to 2020-22 only.

As Figures 5 and 6 below show, the four most deprived wards in Wirral, have the lowest life expectancy of all the 22 wards for both males and females (with some minor changes in order).

In 2020-22, in Wirral males, there was a 13.4-year difference between the wards with the highest and lowest life expectancy in Wirral (West Kirby and Thurstaston vs Birkenhead and Tranmere).

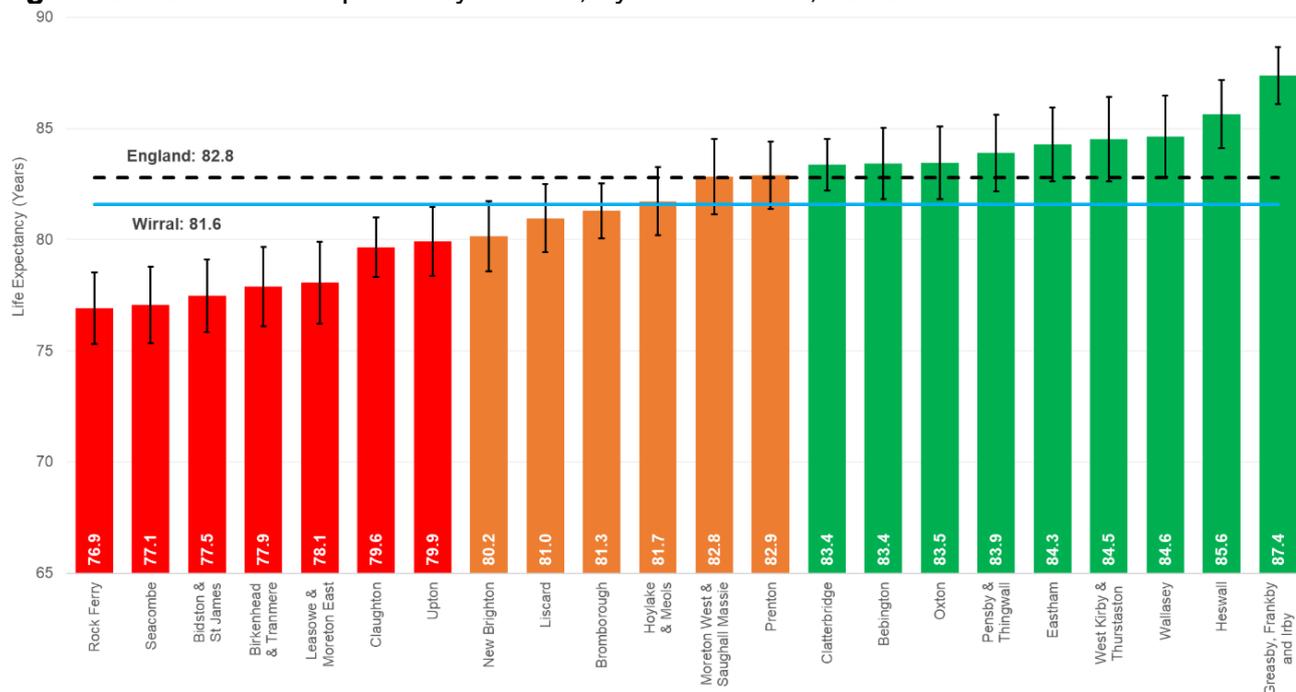
**Figure 5: Male life expectancy at birth, by Wirral Ward, 2020-22**



Source: Public Health Intelligence Team, 2024

Note: Confidence intervals displayed on each bar within this chart show the range at which we can be 95% certain the true value lies between

**Figure 6:** Female life expectancy at birth, by Wirral Ward, 2020-22



**Source:** Public Health Intelligence Team, 2024

**Note:** Confidence intervals displayed on each bar within this chart show the range at which we can be 95% certain the true value lies between

In 2020-22, in Wirral females, there was a 10.5-year difference in LEx between the wards with the highest and lowest life expectancy in Wirral (Greasby, Frankby & Irby vs Rock Ferry).

As shown in this report, LEx at birth and at age 65 has plateaued somewhat over the last few time periods. A [2019 report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development \(OECD\)](#) compares the rate of LEx globally and notes that trends for increases have also stalled in recent years in other developed countries, not just the UK.

It should be noted that 2020-22 encompasses the three peak years of COVID-19 deaths and, as such, LEx at 65 years is at its lowest figure for both sexes and all three areas since 2009-11.

For more comprehensive information about Life Expectancy in Wirral, please see the specific [section of Wirral JSNA on life expectancy](#).

## Causes of the Gap in Life Expectancy between Wirral & England

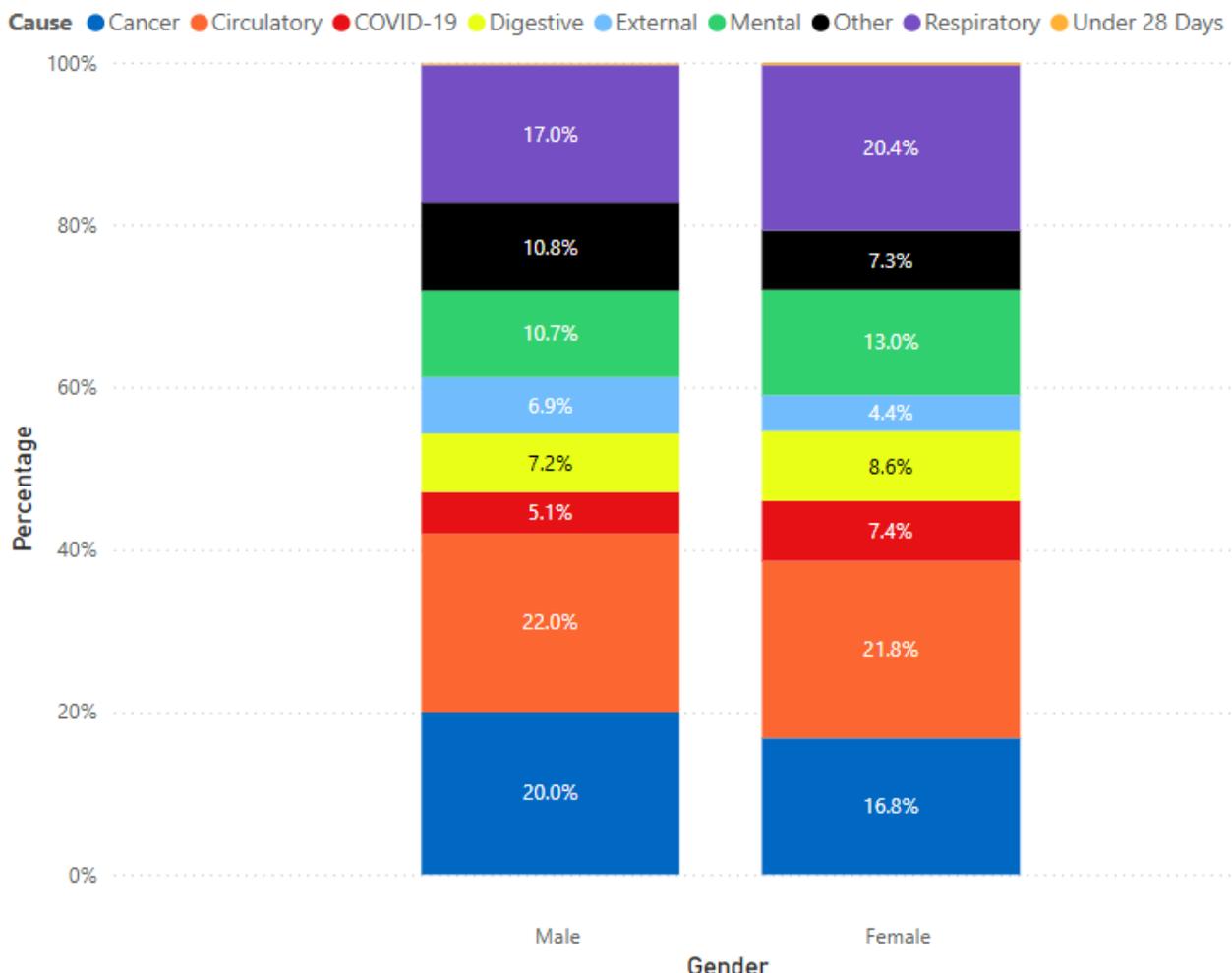
**Updated figures are not currently available for this section and so data relates to 2019-21 report**

Targeting the causes of death which contribute most to the life expectancy gap between Quintile 1 (Deciles 1 and 2) and Quintile 5 (Deciles 9 and 10) within Wirral should have the biggest impact on reducing inequalities. In order to help local areas identify which causes of death are driving health inequalities, **Public Health England produce a Segment Tool** which is available here: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/segment>

**Please note** that this data is produced by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) irregularly, with the latest data showing 2019-21 (in contrast to the remainder of this report which is 2021-23).

We have therefore replicated their methodology using local data to produce the Wirral 2021-23 in **figure 7** below, so the chart is more up to date than the current published [Segment Tool](#) and so will not match at this time.

**Figure 7:** Breakdown of life expectancy gap between most deprived and least deprived areas, by broad cause of death and gender, Wirral, 2021-23



**Source:** Public Health Intelligence Team, 2025

**Source Footnote:** Circulatory includes heart disease and stroke. Respiratory includes flu, pneumonia, and chronic obstructive respiratory disease. Digestive includes alcohol-related conditions such as chronic liver disease and cirrhosis. External includes deaths from injury, poisoning and suicide. Mental and behavioural includes dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

**Note:** It should be noted that the above 'scarf' charts only relate to deaths which contributed to the gap between Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 in Wirral - they are not the causes of *all* deaths in Wirral.

**Figure 7** shows how the broad causes of death contributed to gaps in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas in Wirral by gender.

The largest contributors to the gap were different for males and females in Wirral. In males, circulatory conditions (22.0%) contributed to the gap the most, followed by cancer (20.0%). In females, however, circulatory disease contributed to 21.8% of the gap followed by respiratory (20.4%).

## Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE)

### Figures reported in this section relates to 2021-23

Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) is produced by the Office for National Statistics and is an estimate of the number of years a person can expect to spend in 'very good' or 'good' health ([ONS, 2019d](#)). It is calculated using mortality data and self-reported health status data from the Annual Population Survey.

In 2021-23, HLE in Wirral was 58.5 years for men and 59.5 years for women, compared to 61.5 years for men and 61.9 years for women in England (**Table 1**). On comparing HLE to LEx it shows that, in Wirral, a male could spend approximately 75.5% of their life in 'good' health and 24.5% (or 19.0 years) in less than good health. Women in Wirral are estimated to spend 73.1% of their life in 'good' health and 26.9% (or 22 years) in less than good health.

In 2021-23, male HLE in Wirral decreased from 59.9 to 58.5 years. There was also a 0.8 year decrease observed nationally; this means the gap between male HLE in Wirral and England has increased to 3.0 years (from 2.8 years in 2020-22).

For Wirral females, HLE for 2021-23 also decreased from 60.5 to 59.5 years (-1.0 years). There was also a 0.9 year decrease observed nationally (62.8 to 61.9 years); this means the gap between female HLE in Wirral and England has increased to 2.4 years. Previously, women in Wirral had a greater HLE than in England.

**Table 1:** Life Expectancy, Healthy Life Expectancy and proportion of life spent in good health, 2021-23

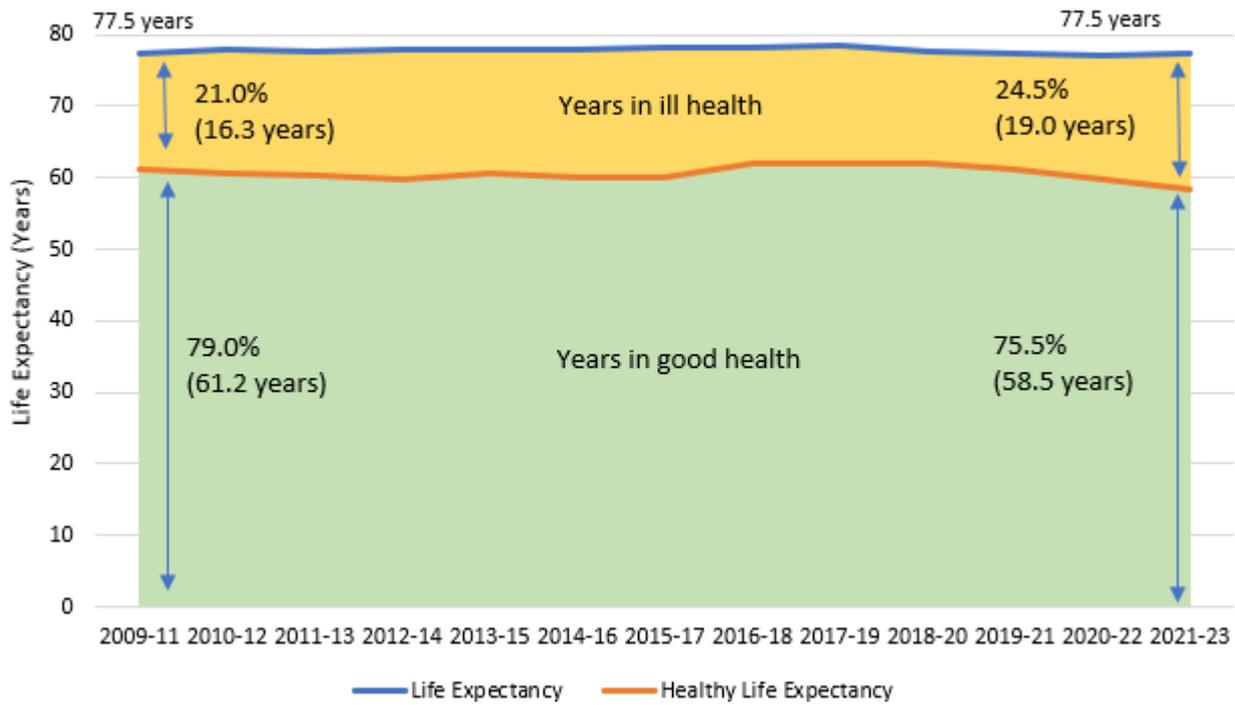
| Area       | Life Expectancy, Males (Years) | Healthy Life Expectancy, Males (Years) | Proportion of life spent in 'good' health, Males | Life Expectancy, Females (Years) | Healthy Life Expectancy, Females (Years) | Proportion of life spent in 'good' health, Females |
|------------|--------------------------------|--|--|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Wirral     | 77.5                           | 58.5                                   | 75.5%  | 81.9                             | 59.5                                     | 72.6%  |
| North West | 77.5                           | 59.1                                   | 76.3%  | 81.6                             | 59.9                                     | 73.4%  |
| England    | 79.1                           | 61.5                                   | 77.7%  | 83.1                             | 61.9                                     | 74.5%  |

Source: [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\), 2025](#)

**Figures 8 and 9** below shows how HLEx has changed in comparison to LEx by gender.

In **Figure 8**, for example, males are shown to be living a similar LEx in 2009-11 (77.5 years compared to 77.5 years in 2021-23) but are spending more of that time living in ill health, both proportionally (21.0% compared to 24.5%) and in the number of years (16.3 years compared to 19.0 years).

**Figure 8:** Trend in Life Expectancy and Health Expectancy, males, Wirral, 2009-11 to 2021-23

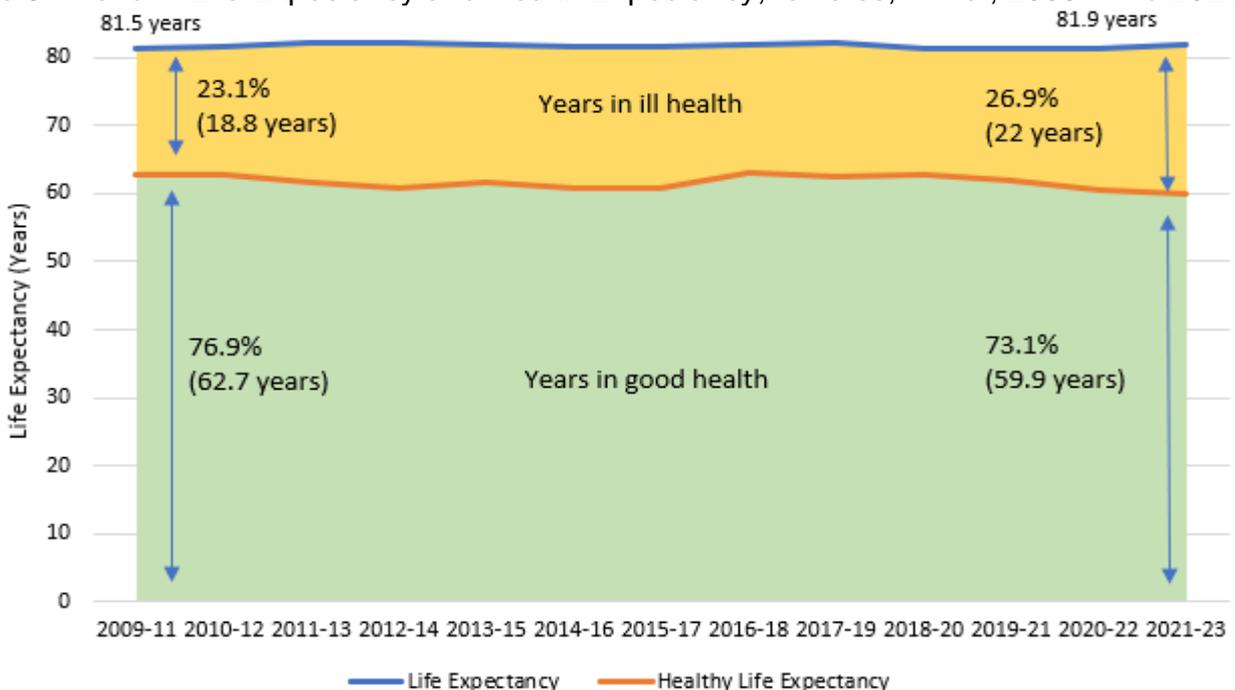


Source: [Public Health Outcomes Framework](#), via Public Health Intelligence Team, 2025

**Figure 9** below, in contrast, shows that females are living slightly longer overall than in 2009-11 (+0.4 years), and are also spending more of that time living in ill health, both proportionally (23.1% compared to 26.9%) and in the number of years (18.8 years compared to 22.0 years).

These figures show, however, that despite females living longer, also with increasing trend of time spent in ill health, females do spend longer in ill health compared to males. This is both proportionally (24.5% for males compared to 26.9% for females) and in the number of years (19.0 years for males compared to 22.0 years for females).

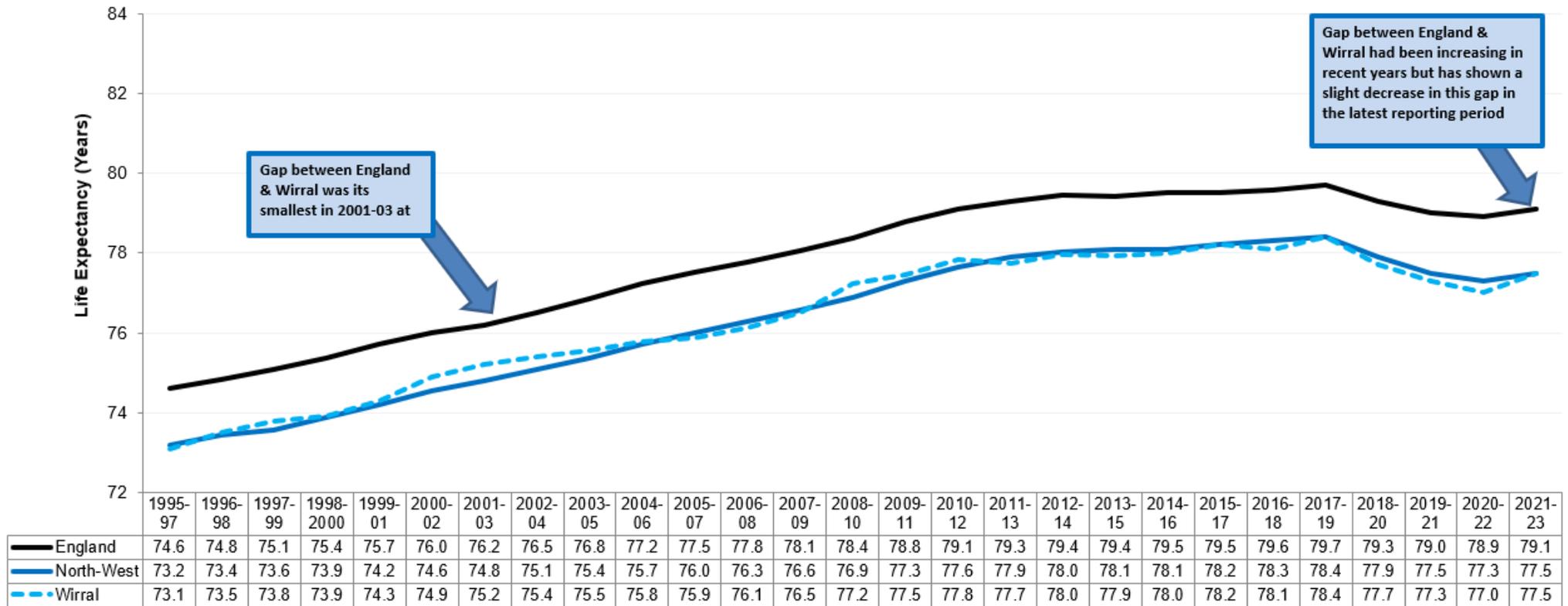
**Figure 9:** Trend in Life Expectancy and Health Expectancy, females, Wirral, 2009-11 to 2021-23



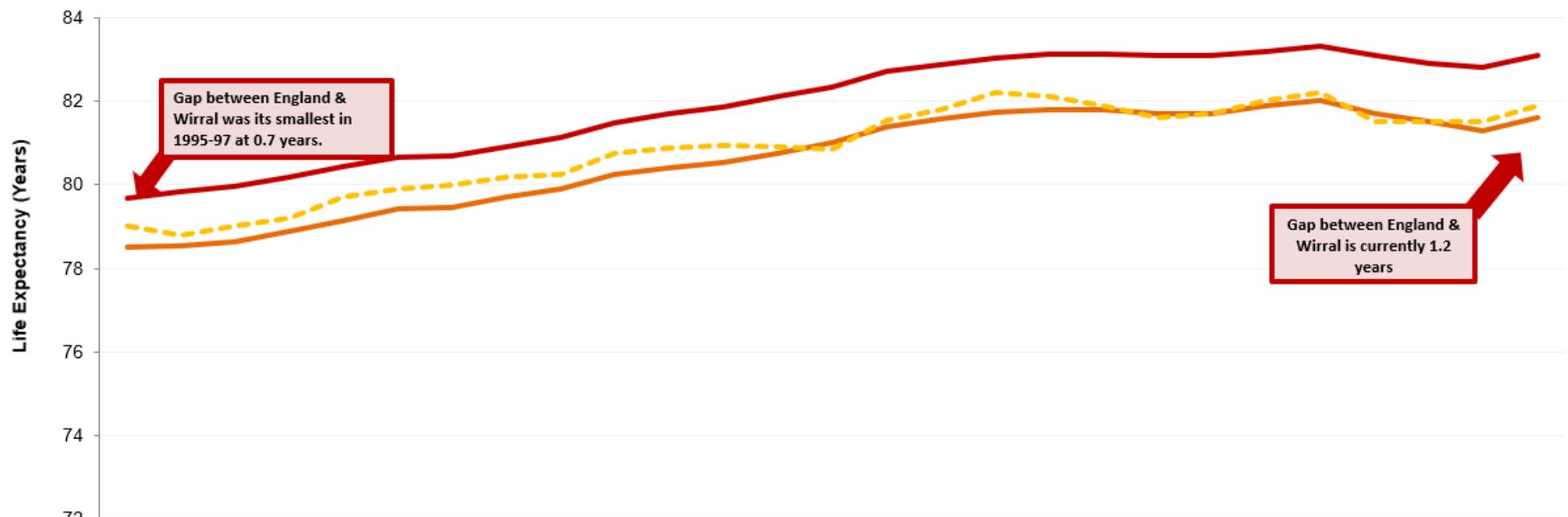
Source: [Public Health Outcomes Framework](#), via Public Health Intelligence Team, 2025

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Trend in Life Expectancy at birth for males in England, North-West & Wirral, 1995-97 to 2021-23



**Appendix 2: Trend in Life Expectancy at birth for females in England, North West & Wirral, 1995-97 to 2021-23**



|              | 1995-97 | 1996-98 | 1997-99 | 1998-2000 | 1999-01 | 2000-02 | 2001-03 | 2002-04 | 2003-05 | 2004-06 | 2005-07 | 2006-08 | 2007-09 | 2008-10 | 2009-11 | 2010-12 | 2011-13 | 2012-14 | 2013-15 | 2014-16 | 2015-17 | 2016-18 | 2017-19 | 2018-20 | 2019-21 | 2020-22 | 2021-23 |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| — England    | 79.7    | 79.8    | 80.0    | 80.2      | 80.4    | 80.7    | 80.7    | 80.9    | 81.1    | 81.5    | 81.7    | 81.9    | 82.1    | 82.3    | 82.7    | 82.9    | 83.0    | 83.1    | 83.1    | 83.1    | 83.1    | 83.2    | 83.3    | 83.1    | 82.9    | 82.8    | 83.1    |
| — North-West | 78.5    | 78.5    | 78.6    | 78.9      | 79.1    | 79.4    | 79.5    | 79.7    | 79.9    | 80.2    | 80.4    | 80.5    | 80.7    | 81.0    | 81.4    | 81.6    | 81.7    | 81.8    | 81.8    | 81.7    | 81.7    | 81.9    | 82.0    | 81.7    | 81.5    | 81.3    | 81.6    |
| - - - Wirral | 79.0    | 78.8    | 79.0    | 79.2      | 79.7    | 79.9    | 80.0    | 80.2    | 80.3    | 80.7    | 80.9    | 80.9    | 80.9    | 80.9    | 81.5    | 81.8    | 82.2    | 82.1    | 81.9    | 81.6    | 81.7    | 82.0    | 82.2    | 81.5    | 81.5    | 81.5    | 81.9    |

## Further Reading / Links

- [Wirral JSNA](#)
- Health & Social Care Outcomes Framework: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/health-and-social-care-outcomes-frameworks>
- Public Health England – Data and analysis tools: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/phe-dataand-analysis-tools>
- Office for National Statistics – Life Expectancies: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies>
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 Explorer: [http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/iod\\_index.html](http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/iod_index.html)
- Molony & Duncan, 2016: <http://www.aimspress.com/journal/aimsph>

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